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# THE MONIST

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## ETHICS, MORALITY, AND METAPHYSICAL ASSUMPTIONS

**I**F WE START with the supposition that ethics and metaphysics are two distinct sciences, there are four possible relationships which they may have to one another. Either ethics is based on metaphysics, or metaphysics is based on ethics, or they are mutually independent.

It has been the rule, perhaps, rather than the exception, to assume, often without proof, the first relationship, namely, that ethics is based on metaphysics. Ethics becomes a kind of appendage, though an inseparable appendage, to metaphysics; logically and often temporarily posterior to it. Examples of this are to be found in rationalistic systems like Spinoza's, in naturalism, such as Spencer's or Stephen's, or in idealism such as Bradley's. We say "often temporally posterior," because it is not always or necessarily so. Bradley's ethics, for example, were not temporally posterior, but temporally prior to, his metaphysics, but his idea of harmony and individuality demand for their completion, and so really presuppose, his metaphysical absolute Idealism.

The second alternative, the basing of metaphysics on ethics, we shall not be concerned with here, to any extent. Kant is the great classical example of this second alternative, but even Kant, although he asserted the primacy of the practical reason, worked out his enquiry into the nature of metaphysics (which resulted in his denying the possibility of metaphysics) before his ethics proper, and his

stress on the fact that the metaphysical ideas of God, Freedom, Immortality, are simply practical postulates, is an outcome of his examination, his criticism, of metaphysics. If it is not strictly true to say that Kant's metaphysics is prior to his ethics, since he denied metaphysics, it is true to say that his views, properly epistemological, on the possibility and character of metaphysics, are prior both logically and temporally to his ethics.

The most modern attempt definitely to construct metaphysics upon an ethical basis is to be found in Professor Sorley's Gifford Lectures, "Moral Values and the Idea of God."

We shall come to certain conclusions about the third possibility, the mutual dependance of ethics and metaphysics, by an examination later of the first alternative.

The fourth possible alternative mentioned was that metaphysics and ethics should be mutually independent, standing alone as separate sciences. The plea for independent metaphysics is seen in the claim for a more scientific philosophy, rid of ethical prejudice, made by thinkers such as Mr. Bertrand Russell. A philosophy of this kind, and the claim for it, is the outcome of an emphasis on the physical and material rather than on the spiritual problems of the universe. The demand that ethics should be an independent science is also "the prevailing doctrine of the Intuitionist moralists and may be found in the Scholastics before them. Certain ethical propositions—such as those that affirm that justice, veracity, and the common welfare are good—are held to be self-evident, not derived from mathematical, causal, or any other purely theoretical propositions. Ethical truths, and truths of theoretical philosophy will be regarded as arrived at in the same way, . . . but there will be no primacy of one over the other; if metaphysics is not a result of ethics, neither is ethics derived from metaphysics. And this method, as far as

regards ethics, has often been employed by writers like Richard Price, who have not worked out any metaphysical system, as well as by others—Reid, for example—whose ethical doctrine is part of a general philosophical view.”<sup>1</sup> The best modern example of ethics as based on intuitions is perhaps Sidgwick, who holds that “there are certain absolute practical principles, the truth of which, when they are explicitly stated, is manifest.”<sup>2</sup> Examples of some of these principles are, the Golden Rule, which Sidgwick restates this: “It cannot be right for A to treat B in a manner in which it would be wrong for B to treat A, merely on the ground that they are two different individuals, and without there being any difference in the natures or circumstances of the two which can be stated as a reasonable ground for difference of treatment.”<sup>3</sup> The truth of this, he says, “so far as it goes, appears to me self-evident.”<sup>4</sup> Again, the principle of Rational Self-love or Prudence—that one ought to aim at one’s good on the whole; and the principle that the good of any one individual is of no more importance, from the point of view of the Universe, than the good of any other; are regarded by Sidgwick as ultimate, self-evident; and requiring no metaphysical or other justification. Summing up, Sidgwick says, “The axiom of Prudence, as I have given it, is a self-evident principle, implied in Rational Egoism as commonly accepted. Again, the axiom of Justice or Equity as above stated—‘that similar cases ought to be treated similarly’—belongs in all its applications to Utilitarianism as much as to any system commonly called Intuitionist: while the axiom of Rational Benevolence is, in my view, required as a rational basis for the Utilitarian system.”

<sup>1</sup> Sorley, *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Methods of Ethics*, 6th ed., p. 379.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., p. 380.

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit., pp. 386-7.

This view, indeed, any view, which regards ethics as independent as based on intuitions, we must reject in the last instance as dogmatic. Maciver,<sup>5</sup> discussing ethics, which he is here assuming to be an independent study, asks, "Is there a science of ethics? If we turn to the authoritative works on ethics we find they are devoted primarily to the question, what is the supreme good or the supreme good for man? . . . But we discover soon enough that there is no body of accepted doctrine in respect to that problem, and that in the nature of the case there can be none. For if I say . . . that what man *ought* to seek is happiness, how can that statement be controverted except by an equally dogmatic statement that they *ought not* to seek it . . . ethics is . . . concerned with the question of ought, the question of right and wrong, good and bad. It is concerned, that is, with a question lying beyond the bounds of scientific procedure, beyond verification, beyond induction, beyond actuality. . . . All ethical claims are claims of worthfulness, and we can neither confirm nor refute them save by our own estimate of their worth." And this is true, most certainly, if we accept the veiled assumption that ethics is an independent study. Only our whole contention will be that it need not be, and indeed must not be, so regarded, that judgments of worth or value must be tested for their truth, just like any other kind of judgment, by their coherence or consistency with the whole scheme of knowledge regarding nature, man, and his place in the cosmos. We may hold certain intuitive beliefs about values, but if these beliefs cannot be supported by cold clear reason, bringing to them everything relevant from science and other knowledge, then we have no right at least to base a *theory* of ethics upon them, however valuable they may be in the guidance of our practical life.

<sup>5</sup> *Community, a Sociological Study*, pp. 52 and 53.

The attempt, then, to work out a moral scheme for man, apart from any consideration of his origin, his psychological nature, his relation to his environment—and therefore, to some extent the general nature of his environment—seems to us to narrow, quite unreasonably, the sphere of morals, and indeed to render any worthy answer to its questions impossible. To rest ethics upon an intuition unsupported by grounds of reasonable knowledge, is to render it subjective and limited to the beliefs of a particular time, place, society, or even individual. The test must, in the first place, be one of consistency, and in the second place, it must be cosmic rather than local, eternal rather than merely temporal. Man in his deepest nature is an active member in this wider polity of the cosmos, and it is in the demands and experiences of his deepest nature that we must seek for ethical principles. Man regarded thus, as on the rim of the vast cosmic whirl, may appear a little, a solitary, perhaps a lonely spectacle; but this solitariness, this aloneness, even this loneliness, of man, is as ultimate a fact of his nature (a fact too often forgotten when his sociality is stressed), as is his dependence for his very self upon his fellowmen. Man has desires, though too often he does not know it, that cannot be satisfied except in this aloneness with the infinite, when his spirit is filled with what the religious call religion and the holy-minded call worship. Ethical systems hitherto have been based almost solely upon the fact of man's community with his fellows: the idea which we shall here attempt to work out will emphasize, though it must never, never, emphasize exclusively, the fact of man's solitary relationship with the wider cosmic whole. In the very realization of this wider relationship is to be found, we believe, the key to the nature of goodness, whereby can be unlocked the doors of these problems of man's no less important relationships with his fellows. And in so far as discussion of man's place in the

cosmos involves questions as to the ultimate nature of the cosmos, so far it will be necessary to make, dogmatically perhaps (since this cannot be a metaphysical essay as well), one or two assumptions about the general nature of reality.

There are certain problems surrounding the relationship of ethics to metaphysics, which require, perhaps, a preliminary treatment. One of the most usual objections to the view that ethics must be based upon metaphysics, is that the "ought" can never be based upon the "is" because there can in the nature of things be no passage between the two. And in a sense this is true. From the "is" as such, it is not possible to deduce the "ought," if "ought" implies a standard above that which is. But as soon as we examine it we see that this is true only in the narrowest possible sense, in so narrow a sense indeed, that it is nothing more than tautology. If the "ought" and the "is" are defined negatively in terms of one another (i. e., "ought"= something which (at least) *is not*, and "is"= something which (at least) *is not "ought"*) then by definition it is impossible to find the positive meaning of one in terms of the other. But there is, in fact, a sense in which the "ought" can be discovered in the "is," and that is, when what ought to be does actually exist. Aristotle, for example, took as his standard of what *ought* to be the actual choice of the morally wise man. So, although in the very narrow, logical, even tautological, sense we have mentioned above, it may be true that if I *am* just in a particular case there is no meaning in telling me that I ought to be just in that particular case, yet it is in a broader sense palpably true that if one ought to be just in such and such a particular way, and I am just in such and such a particular way, then in that case at least the "ought" has become "is."

It is indeed the "ought" in the larger sense of the moral ideal as a whole, that philosophers have alluded to, when they have said that it is not derivable from what is. But

if it is in no sense derivable from what is, how is it possible to justify its claims in the scheme of knowledge, how is it possible to assert it otherwise than, as we said, dogmatically? Further, how can it be given any *content* at all, if we are not allowed to derive its content from what is? Or, what is the same thing from a slightly different point of view, how can the moral ideal which is in no sense and in no degree realized, have any meaning? It may be a fact that moral ideals, what ought to be, are never fully realized, never, in the full sense, actually *are*. So it may not be possible to discover the ideal as an actual existent *fact* in what is. But what ethics is concerned with mainly, is, not the discovery of a fact, as such, but a **value which is** a standard by which oughts may be measured. And there is no inherent impossibility, we believe, in the finding of real values, and more especially the direction in which real values lie, in reality as it actually exists.

But the view that the problem of the relation of ethics to metaphysics is the problem of the relation of "ought" to "is," is indeed a somewhat narrow one. In reality the question is much bigger, as we hinted in our last paragraph. It is the question of the relation between judgments of value and judgments of fact. A judgment of value need not be in the form of "ought," indeed in so, and directly, it cannot be in the form of "ought." Judgments which contain "ought" are really dependent upon judgments of value which do not contain "ought" themselves. "This is good, therefore I *ought* to strive to attain it." Here the second clause is directly dependent upon the first. And the first, notice, is a judgment of fact of a particular kind (justifiable, often, in terms of a wider realm of fact), "this is (as a matter of fact) good. . . . A judgment of value may then, clearly enough, be a judgment of fact, and vice versa. There is no unbridgeable gap between them, as is often supposed. The reason why there is so often sup-



posed to be such a gap, is, we think, just because the relationship between fact and value is confused with that between "is" and "ought," in the narrow sense alluded to on page 6. If "is" and "ought" are defined negatively in terms of one another, then it follows by definition that "ought" can never be discovered in what is, just because "ought" is (explicitly or implicitly) defined as something which *is not*. And the supposition that an absolute "ought" can never in *any* degree be or exist, the supposition which seems to make it imperative for some moralists to say that "ought" should be defined as (at least) what is not, seems to be grounded in a frantic conviction that if we ever admit that the "ought" or ideal is in any degree attainable, we have destroyed completely its ideal nature. So we must preserve, like Moses, the bounds of the moral Sinai, lest the people, breaking through to gaze, should perish.

The gap which exists as a matter of fact between what is and what ought to be is not for a moment to be denied, of course. We are only maintaining that it is a relative and not an absolute one, and further that the existence of this gap is no warrant for any assertion that there is a gap necessarily existing between any given fact and any given value. A value may be a fact, and vice versa, as we saw. It is indeed the task of the moral life to make values into facts, and for the individual it is essential that he should be conscious of the gap which lies between the fact of his life and the further values which he desires to realize in himself. It is because the desirable thing is just beyond our present reach that we must strive to bridge the gap by our efforts. What ought to be and what is, value and fact, are in this sense, and only in this sense, separated from one another. But the very fact of the moral life is a witness to their constant abridgement by human effort, and although the abstract Ought (with a capital letter) may theoretically never become *is*, or moral effort would

cease, yet the concrete, particular ought is always and continuously being brought into existence.

We have been concerned in the preceding paragraphs with showing that within the strictly moral sphere, fact and value are not necessarily opposed, that even "ought" and "is" themselves are not necessarily opposed, unless we define them in a narrow and restricted way. We have established, with some trouble, what is perhaps an obvious fact when it is once reflected upon. It has been necessary to establish this fact because of the undue stress laid in ethical text books upon the opposition between what is and what ought to be, which is usually assumed to be parallel to the distinction between a natural and a normative science.

But in confining our issue to a somewhat narrowly moral example, we have not yet really faced the fundamental difficulty which besets the problem of the relation between ethics and metaphysics. That difficulty is, not, can values be facts? or, can the "ought" exist as a matter of fact? but, can we pass from a non-ethical proposition to an ethical one? If we can, then, says the argument, ethics is derivable from metaphysics; if we cannot, then it is not, and the ground of ethics must be found elsewhere, presumably in some sort of intuition.

There is a supposition in the assumed antithesis between ethics and metaphysics which requires careful examination. The supposition is simply that, while ethics has to do with ethical propositions, metaphysics is thought to be concerned with non-ethical ones. And the question arises, is it a valid assumption? May not our third alternative stated in the first paragraph, be truer? May not ethics and metaphysics overlap, and so be mutually dependent? Is the subject matter of metaphysics definitely and necessarily non-ethical, in the sense of excluding judgments of moral value?

To say that it is, seems, at first, anyhow, to imply an unnecessarily narrow view of the scope of metaphysics. If metaphysics means what Descartes, for instance, thought it to mean, or if it means what can be proved by the empirical methods of natural science, then it is perhaps true, that from this brand of metaphysics, there can be obtained no judgments of value. If metaphysics is so defined (implicitly or explicitly) that it excludes judgments of value, then of course it follows by definition that no ethical results can follow therefrom. Ethical text books are right when they oppose ethics to the natural sciences, for from these as such can be derived no ethical propositions. But metaphysics, though it may deal with, and be influenced by, truths which it is the business of the scientist to discover, is certainly very much more than a summation of their truths. It is, rather, being the attempt to understand *experience* as a whole, in itself a valuation of the truths of science. In setting them in their place in the cosmic scheme, it cannot avoid interpreting them according to some principle of value or another, and any such unifying interpretation is in itself a valuation. That is what, in the end, Plato's "Form of the Good" meant. It is then not merely that we must take into account in our metaphysics what are usually called moral values, in the sense of values relating to human conduct. We must in addition pronounce judgments of value in terms of some dominating value upon facts and truths which are in themselves non-ethical.

But the question still remains unanswered. Admitting that metaphysics must include strictly moral facts in its survey, and that it must arrange truths under some dominating conception of value, is it true that this value is of an *ethical* kind? The answer to such a question would of course depend upon the type of metaphysics which is assumed. Certain theologies, for example, have conceived

of the universe in a strictly moral or ethical sense, "moral" and "ethical" being taken here in their etymological meaning, as related to human custom and tradition and conduct. The orthodox Christian theory of the Atonement is an **instance**. It is based upon a notion of justice or requital more or less savage (according to the way in which it is interpreted) which is grounded quite definitely in a pre-Christian morality which had its salvation in the blood of goats, and which however it is interpreted is never less than crudely "moral" in a definitely anthropomorphic sense.

This is an extreme example, and it may be maintained that it is possible to explain the universe in strictly moral terms without falling into the nets of anthropomorphism. Perhaps it is so, and our disagreement with such a view may in the end turn out to be a matter of terminology. It seems to us, however (and it is a strong thing to say), that the terms "moral" and "ethical" can never, without distortion be made large enough to include the universe, or to be made its supreme predicate, although interpreted in a large sense they may well be one of several fundamental predicates. The terms "morality" and "ethics" can never wholly escape from their own etymological significance, and even if they could, it still remains true that morality is *not* the whole of man's nature, though everything he does or thinks or feels is capable of moral valuation. And a metaphysics, to be true, must, as Mr. Bradley has said, satisfy *all* sides of our nature. Our own view is that the aesthetic side of our nature has received too little consideration from metaphysics. A complete view of the world must indeed give complete justice to the fundamental values, beauty and truth as well as goodness.

It is not our purpose here to construct or defend any such complete view of the world. We must return to our original question—as to whether the subject matter of

metaphysics is definitely and necessarily non-ethical—answer it, and so see more clearly the relation of ethics to metaphysics, and from that proceed to examine the general nature of the effect upon the moral life of a definite view of, and attitude towards, reality. The meaning of this very abstract programme will perhaps grow clearer as we proceed.

Our answer to the question as to whether the subject matter of metaphysics is ethical, depended, we saw, on the way in which it was taken. Metaphysics must, being an account of experience in general, take into account the facts of moral as well as other kinds of experience, and it must be a valuation of the facts of experience. On the other hand, although metaphysics is a valuation, we found we could not hold it to be a moral valuation, in the strict sense of "moral," because that tended to involve an anthropomorphic view of the universe. And now, as we have accepted provisionally the view that ethics must be grounded in metaphysics (the grounding of metaphysics in ethics can only mean that metaphysics must take account of ethical values), we have to face the problem of how ethics, the science of moral value, can be related to metaphysics, which uses some other conception of value, which we decided at least could not, strictly speaking, be called moral. Can the moral judgment, "to do this is good" be shown to be true or false by reference not merely to the realm of morals itself, but by a reference to the nature of the larger cosmic reality of which man is a member as truly as he is a member of the community of men, and by reference to man's place and function in that larger community? Is moral good explainable in terms of a wider value which cannot itself be called "good" in the same sense? If it can, then ethics will be based on metaphysics which is not itself strictly ethical (though it must include and therefore be

profoundly influenced by ethical facts). A transition will be possible from the one science to the other.

As it is the practical aspect of the relationship which concerns us here, it will make the problem clearer if we approach it from that point of view. We shall not give any reasoned account of our view of the kind of metaphysic upon which ethics may be based, or study their theoretical relationships, but shall examine the practical effects which follow from a certain definite attitude to the universe, an attitude which no doubt does involve very far reaching metaphysical assumptions and consequences which it is impossible here to elaborate.

The problem is then now, not so much, "is moral good explainable in terms of some other kind of wider value?" as, "is my conduct affected morally, for good or ill, by my attitude towards the wider objective world, and if so, how?" and, "what is the nature of my attitude, and what assumptions does it involve?"

Taking these questions in reverse order and answering them boldly and in loose fashion, we may say, firstly, that we presuppose that the universe is at least a **good universe**; secondly, that a man's attitude towards, or relationships with, a universe which he presupposes, and finds by experience, to be good, can involve a definite emotional tone, to be described; and thirdly, that this attitude or relationship having emotional tone can so affect character that conduct is influenced, and made morally good, thereby. In a word, and still more loosely, it is the emotion which we experience when we perceive, sometimes in a flash, universal good in and through the objects (or persons) of our experience, which is the inspiration of the good life. This is necessarily vague, and in some measure incorrectly stated. It is impossible within the scope of this article to justify it fully. For the present, let us examine certain difficulties which appear on the surface.

In the first place, we have used the forbidden term "good" of the universe. Our excuse is lack for the present of a better word. In order to understand what we do mean by it, we must consider the kind of experience which we have when we make such a judgment as "it's a good world." For it is with an experience, and not with the validity of metaphysical judgments that we are now concerned. We are not referring to the sense of mere physical well-being which a man has, for example, after a comfortable meal, in a deep armchair before a warm fire with a glowing pipe, nor even such exhilaration as we suppose even the old must feel on a morning in the first springtime. These kinds of experiences do often give rise to utterance of optimistic judgments, but it is something bigger and deeper than this to which we refer. The experience may dawn slowly upon us when in contemplative vein, or it may flash suddenly like a divine light upon some incident, person, or thing which before had seemed trifling, even worthless. It is a glimpse of the universal through the particular, it is what men of religion have described as a vision of the ineffable in things of sense, and indeed it is religious experience of a kind, though it does not necessarily involve any formal theological creeds. It may be aroused by contact with natural objects, by intercourse with fellow human beings, humble or great, by joy in work, by creation, by discovery, and by adventure, by things of the mind or things of the body, by painting, music, poetry, or any of the arts, by, in fact, any human experience whatsoever, short of what is gross or hideous or immoral. It is a common experience of souls we are wont to call great, of those who have vision to see the universal spirit in little particular things, of men who are able to discern the true value of life and reality, who could say, like Jesus to his unseeing followers, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of

heaven," or, "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." It is the common experience of great men, but it is not their monopoly; and neither do they have these experiences because they are great first. Rather do they become great and greater because of the greatness which they are continually able to see in everyday things. And it is that vision which prompts them, and us through their influence, to exclaim, "it is a good world."

The goodness we may thus predicate cannot justly be called moral goodness, neither is it exactly beauty, even though it may be revealed both in human moral goodness and in the contemplation of beauty in art or nature. It seems to be simply intrinsic value itself, and indescribable in terms of any other particular kind of value. And yet on the other hand, it appears to partake both of the nature of goodness and of beauty. "Our appreciation of a beautiful sunset," says Professor Sorley,<sup>6</sup> "differs from our appreciation of a good deed or a good character. The former is admiration simply, the latter approval." And later,<sup>7</sup> "We do not speak of a sunset as good instead of beautiful, or, if we do, we recognize that we are not using the word 'good' in its ethical meaning. It is more common to apply the word 'good' to the work of human art, and still more common to apply it to the artist . . . moral approval is something superadded to aesthetic appreciation and not identical with it." It may be, therefore, when we say, "it is a good world," that there is a blending of two different kinds of judgment, one aesthetic, the other moral, either of which can predominate, according to circumstances. We may, even in contemplating nature, for example, experience a wave of sympathy with something definitely spiritual

<sup>6</sup> *Op.cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 33.



which seems to reside there. There is a feeling of harmonious unity within ourselves due to the fact that we are "at one with nature" which is outside ourselves. In certain moods, and with certain types of mind, this attitude may become definitely religious; we may adore reverently, we may feel gratitude to a Person for the joy that is, not merely given to us from without, but which comes from a Being greater than, but intimately akin with our inner selves. In these moments we may say, not simply, "it is a good world," but, "God is good" and therefore, "it is good for us to be here." At other times when the vision comes with equal intensity, literally "the light that never was on sea or land," we may be so absorbed in the contemplation of beauty that we have neither ability for words nor need of them. In these moments it is still "good for us to be here," there is still a direct experience of communion with a universal spirit in particular things; but the experience itself is sufficient, and it is only afterwards, if at all, that we may make judgments of goodness or even of beauty. The first, the religious attitude, is one involving a consciousness of distinction of self from a Person, even whilst at one with that Person; in the second, the aesthetic attitude, we seem to be (that is not to say that we *are*; we are only analyzing the felt experience) so absorbed in, so projected into the object which we contemplate, that it is sometimes with a start that the spirit, after such an experience, realizes that it is, after all, attached to a physical body. Aesthetic contemplation in itself involves no desire to think or act in any way, though it may give rise afterwards to speculation about its meaning or to deep desires for artistic creation. The self-conscious religious attitude to a Being who is thought of as good in one in which it is easier to define the sort of value which is predicated, than the aesthetic attitude in which per se no predication is involved at all. If the aesthetic

experience simply died with itself, as it were, it would not even result in judgments and we could therefore say nothing about the view of the world which it engenders. It is because the man who has the aesthetic experience is also a remembering, thinking, acting being, that we can truly say that the judgment, "it is a good world," is reached through the avenue of the aesthetic experience as well as through the religious or moral one.

The judgment, "it is a good world," would indeed have an entirely different meaning for the man with religious and the man with aesthetic tendencies, if either of the two were a complete type in himself, or existed in a water-tight compartment. It is because man cannot be solely interested in any one of the three, the good, the beautiful, or the true, that "good" in "it is a good world" cannot be given definitely moral, or aesthetic, or intellectualistic content. The artist (if we take him as representing roughly the man of aesthetic sensibility) may hold no overt religious beliefs, may even be, like Shelley, what is called an atheist, or of what are (again) called "loose morals." He proves, nevertheless, by his actions, that he believes in an ultimate value in reality worth striving to express. Again, the "moral" or religious man may regard definitely ethical or moral qualities as of the most fundamental importance in the universe, and yet he may be more susceptible than he knows to beauty. Most probably it will be to natural beauty that he will turn, since that satisfies his bias toward religion and enables him to think of a "Divine Creator."

We must, in fact, reassert that, if our judgment is to be true when we say, "it is a good world," the term "good" must indeed imply value unqualified; unqualified just because if explored into its depths, it must bring us face to face with any and *all* the values that reside in the universe. "All the great values are cognate with each other,"

says Bosanquet,<sup>8</sup> "and any of them can be reinforced and vitalized from any other as a point of departure." And each man has his own interests, which to a large extent determine his environment. This environment displays in its character some dominant value, whether intrinsic or instrumental, and it is as a rule this value which seems most important to those who perceive it. To the philosopher it may be truth, to the aesthetic beauty, to the practical moralist goodness. These are intrinsic. To the social worker the most important value may seem temperance, or housing, or sexual morality: to the tradesman it may be honesty or money or leisure; to the public man it may be power, and so on. The dominating object of desire in a man's life is for him the dominating value. But for philosophy it is essential to rid oneself of personal bias, even with regard to the fundamental intrinsic values. "It is a good world," may mean, for me, that the world is good because in men's lives or in nature we see shining a larger, wider goodness, or it may mean that it is good because I experience delight in a labor for truth, or because beauty is there, and beauty seems enough. But for such a judgment to be true in the completest sense, it must hold nothing less than the fullest meaning which is in and beyond all men's minds when they make it.

That is the difficulty inherent in the word "good." "My ways are not your ways, saith the Lord," and finite man the moralist has no right to attribute his little human concepts born of human relationships to the Cosmic Spirit. Moreover, even his finite brother-man the artist would not agree with him. There are three senses in which the term "good" might be used. The first is the sense disputed above, in which it might be used of the world. The second can be predicated of a person, and might be divided into two classes, in one of which it is applied to God, in the

<sup>8</sup> *Some Suggestions in Ethics*, p. 234.

other to man. The third sense is used of actions which have intrinsic moral value, as when we say, "this is a good action." Some moralists would distinguish a good action from a right one, but we are not at present concerned with this. Now, when we speak of "a good action," or "a good person," if that person be human, the meaning is clear. When applied to God it is only clear if God be represented in some anthropomorphic way, as, for example, a Father. When applied to the universe, it has more or less definite meaning according as the Spirit of the Universe is identified or not with a personal God, but it seems that the more clear and definite the meaning of the word "good" the less true is it to apply it as a general predicate to the universe. Because good in this sense is clearly a value limited and defined in human lives and relationships (it is better that "good" should be taken to mean this) and although *moral* value may be regarded (in some greatly enhanced form) as belonging to the universe or reality as a whole, it would there become transfused with other values equally fundamental, and it would be the fusion of all these values which affects us when we have that vision of the universal through the particular, which we have described. The word "good" is then misleading, and our first conjecture (page 16), that it can be counted as nothing else but simply *value*, is perhaps most true in the end. If we are content to accept that it is in Universal Value (whatever that may mean) that all values meet, that the Universe is one, and that goodness, beauty, and truth, are but aspects of it (though they do not for that reason lose their identity), then we may begin to understand how it is that in a world of all sorts, all sorts and conditions of men may, if they will but gaze outwards from themselves, see Value in the infinite from the side of the finite, and be strengthened thereby in their own finite lives. It is in that sense that the one Value which before we called by the name

"good" may appear to ten thousand men in ten thousand different ways, though mainly by the great avenues, Goodness, Beauty and Truth.

It has not been our purpose, we may once again repeat, to establish one existence of such a value by metaphysical argument, but rather to describe, and without any attempt at psychological precision, the *experience* of it which may give rise to the judgment, whether spoken or implied, that it exists. The experience may come, we have said, mainly in one of three great ways. But whether it comes in the midst of practical life, or through speculation by the intellect, or through contemplation of beautiful objects, it must be something more than merely cognitive. It must be a felt experience, with a definite emotional tone which it is possible to describe.

It is important, then, to realize the significance of the value experience, for it is possible, we think, to base a whole moral theory upon it. Man, we believe, must, as he draws from the external world food and drink for his living body, draw from the cosmic value-experience the dynamic energy of his ever-growing moral life. And we can no more *explain* this moral life without reference to its cosmic environment, than we can form *theories* of physiological processes without reference to substances drawn from the wider realm of physical nature.

Our main metaphysical assumption has been that the Universe has Value which may at certain times be experienced by knowing, feeling, acting man.

It may seem perhaps that our assumption is too large a one to stand without some metaphysical proof, too easily optimistic to be accepted uncritically as the basis of a philosophy of morality. It may be said that we cannot, however we will, avoid considering facts so vital as pain and evil, or to take another aspect of the same thing, we cannot blind ourselves to the apparently non-moral, even the

anti-moral character, of the evolutionary process in nature. Pain has destroyed the moral life as well as made it. Surely if experience is to be the criterion, a pessimistic experience is just as real, just as much a fact as the Value experience which we have made so all important? We cannot here refute such a contention. Our only answer here to such a question would be that although it is possibly true in a sense that a pessimistic outlook on life is as much a fact as an optimistic one, the question arises as to whether it is possible to construct an adequate ethics upon such an experience as its base. If such an ethics could be constructed satisfactorily, then it would be its own justification, and optimism would stand condemned. We are of the opinion that the difficulties in the way of such a pessimistic ethics are insurmountable. As optimism must explain the fact of pessimism (which we think is largely the failure to distinguish between pain and evil) so would pessimism have to explain away the facts of the value experiences.

Even the fact of pain, so poignant in nature, is not, we can here only rather dogmatically assert, a fact that sets us at any real enmity with her. Our combat is but a harnessing of nature's forces to the chariots of the moral life; and the experience of value, even in pain, is the supreme testimony to the triumph of spirit over matter, of mind force over brute force. Once more, then, the felt knowledge, even through pain, that Value is in the world, can be a force revitalizing the whole texture of the moral life, the full realization of the importance of which must certainly, in its turn, most powerfully affect moral theory.

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